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TAGS: PHUM ETRD PREL WHO KBIO KFLU TH

SUBJECT: THAI FM ON PANDEMIC SURVEILLANCE AND COMPULSORY
LICENSING OF DRUGS

Classified By: Charge Mark C. Storella for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) In a February 2 meeting with Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya for Geneva diplomats, Charge lauded Thai activism on international health security issues, but also expressed the hope that we would be able to make progress in the coming year to address our common interest in a well functioning global influenza surveillance network (GISN). Charge acknowledged Thai concerns on intellectual property issues, but urged that they not obstruct progress toward ensuring international health security.

¶2. (C) FM Kasit said that his government recognizes pandemic influenza as a foreign policy issue. However, the RTG faces considerable domestic opposition from "leftist" doctors in Thailand and a health ministry that considers these issues as "100% its own turn." Turning to intellectual property matters, Kasit pledged that Thailand would make no further unilateral declarations regarding compulsory licensing of drugs. He said the Royal Thai Government was preparing a second tripartite interministerial committee meeting to coordinate positions on access to affordable drugs. He hoped that the RTG could work with WHO and the Clinton foundation to support the effort.

¶3. (C) Comment: we were struck by the candor of FM Kasit's comments to a group of diplomats representing eight countries (U.S., China, India, France, UK, Australia, and the Czech Republic. We defer to Embassy Bangkok as to whether Kasit can make good on his pledge to halt unilateral Thai moves on compulsory licensing of drugs given the domestic complexities he faces.

STORELLA